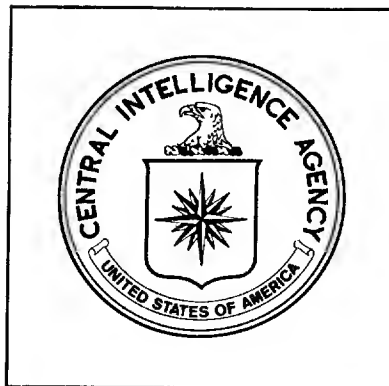


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Mazurov and Consumer Industry

The public record of First Deputy Premier Mazurov's activities indicates that he has a special responsibility for consumer industries, trade, and services. A series of decrees on these subjects this past year may have been issued under his aegis. The evidence does not point to a strong bias against heavy industry on Mazurov's part, but his duties may have engendered an interest in and appreciation of the problems of consumer production.

In July 1973, Mazurov mentioned to a US Embassy officer that he had responsibility for transportation matters. His other functions are revealed by examining his appearances at economic meetings that often command attendance by the responsible deputy premier. During the 1970s, Mazurov has attended meetings concerning light industry, consumer cooperatives, trade, the fish industry, railroads, and education. He made practically no solo appearances at meetings dealing with heavy industry. His interest in education was also signaled in July 1973 when he delivered a report on the subject to the Supreme Soviet.

What accounts for the pattern in Mazurov's activities? It should be observed that his actual concerns undoubtedly have been broader than the ones listed above, especially when he was the only first deputy premier for industry. He has not betrayed a bias against heavy industry in his public speeches. His interest in the railroads probably springs from his education and early employment in the transportation field. He may have assumed other duties because they were not being handled by the deputy premiers, most of whom have supervised sectors of heavy industry and foreign trade. Thus, the simplest explanation may be that he has been filling gaps while exercising general responsibility for the industrial economy.

Soviet authorities have given consumer affairs considerable public attention in the past year. Brezhnev, in his speech to the Central Committee last October,

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criticized past performance in consumer production, called the five-year targets minimum goals, and announced that the Council of Ministers was preparing proposals to develop this sector further. The next month, *Kommunist* carried an article by Mazurov on consumer welfare, in which he noted that a series of measures was being devised for improving planning and incentives in the production of consumer goods. The decrees soon began to issue forth:

--Council of Ministers decree on improving light industry in Moscow and Ivanovo Oblasts during 1976-80, November 1976.

--Central Committee and Council of Ministers decree on developing consumer production during 1976-80 and improving quality, January 1977.

--Central Committee decree on the work of the RSFSR Ministry of Consumer Services, February 1977.

--Central Committee and Council of Ministers decree on developing trade, July 1977.

The decrees encompass measures that should bring some marginal improvements, but they avoid major new investments or systemic changes that would make a large difference in performance.

What is the significance of Mazurov's portfolio? Since he has been out of sight for long stretches during the past year--presumably because of sickness--the decrees show that he remains active in the policy realm. He is overseeing a sector in which Brezhnev has long shown interest, but also one that he has often criticized. Mazurov finds himself paired in the government and party with heavy industry advocates. The new First Deputy Premier, N. A. Tikhonov, has long supervised the metallurgical and coal industries, and his appointment last September may encourage a division of labor at that level. The party's chief overseer of the economy, Kirilenko, has also been chiefly concerned with heavy industry. Mazurov's working relationship with Kirilenko may be more complementary than contentious, but the evidence is thin. The question takes on importance, however, because they are the pair next in line for the top party and government jobs.

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